

Wheelchair Repair Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

11:30 AM in Room 1B of the LOB and Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 11:35 AM by Chairman, Beverley Brakeman.

The following task force members were present:

Members: Beverley Brakeman, Sen. Seminara L. S08, Rep. Case, J. 63, Rep. Smith, F. 118, David Morgana, Jonathan Sigworth, Rick Famiglietti, Joseph Shortt, Seth Johnson, Melissa Marshall, Sheldon Toubman, Wayne Grau, Diane Racicot, John Lee Goetz, Gary Gilberti, Susan Halpin, Darrell Ruopp, Jon Slifka, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Ginny Mahoney, Barbara Cass, Jim Carson

Absent were: Michelle Duprey

Guests: Sean King, Office of Health Advocate  
Lara Manzione, Office of the State Comptroller

**Opening Statements & Introductions:**

Chair Beverley Brakeman welcomed everyone to the task force meeting.

**Approval of Minutes – September 20, 2023:**

Chair Brakeman requested a motion and a second to approve the minutes from the September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **General Discussion:**

Chair Brakeman explained that there would be several presentations during the meeting to get an idea of the payer's status for users of Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT). She welcomed many of the meeting's attendees and thanked them for their participation in the task force.

Chair Brakeman welcomed Sean King from the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA), who gave a brief overview of what OHA does.

Chair Brakeman emphasized that the task force is on a quick timeline and needs to have a report completed by February 2024. She hoped that the group could come up with "substantive [changes and improvements] and make a difference" for Connecticut's users of CRT. She asked the task force if there were any questions from the meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup> and asked the Connecticut Insurance Department (CID) to "kick us off."

### **Presentation from the CT Insurance Department:**

Jim Carson of CID introduced himself and explained that he and his colleague, Gerard, conducted research and couldn't find any complaints about CRT or wheelchairs. Mr. Carson encouraged the group to reach out to CID to file any complaints that they may have, or if they have any issues.

Rep. Case thanked Mr. Carson for attending the meeting.

Chair Brakeman asked if anyone in the group had questions for Mr. Carson. Wayne Grau wanted to confirm the percentage of the population that CID regulates, and what that entails. Mr. Carson explained that the percentage is the "fully insured individual insurance that's on and off the health exchange," and that it is roughly 24%.

Chair Brakeman asked Mr. Carson to confirm that it is not employer-planned, which Mr. Carson explained is through the federal Department of Labor and not CID. He also specified that state insurance is through the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC). She thanked Mr. Carson for his testimony and referred to it as "really helpful."

Sheldon Toubman asked the group about a figure that was brought up during the last meeting, which was that 13% of the population was commercially insured and is regulated by the State. He wanted to know how it compares to the 24% that Mr. Carson mentioned. Susan Halpin responded by explaining that it depends on the figures that you're looking at, as well as market changes that differ from year to year. Ms. Halpin also explained that her number was benchmarked against the total population, and she

believes that the number that Mr. Carson was using was against the commercial market.

Chair Brakeman asked for clarification on self-insured vs. fully insured plans, and who regulates what. Ms. Halpin explained that the fully insured market is regulated by CID in compliance with legislation that has passed federally and statewide.

Chair Brakeman and Rep. Case asked the group to raise their hand and speak out instead of using the virtual chat function on Zoom.

Sean King explained that he sent out a link to everyone in the group that members could use to ask for assistance through OHA.

### **Presentation from the Department of Social Services:**

Chair Brakeman introduced Ginny Mahoney, Medical Policy Consultant within the Division of Health Services from the Department of Social Services (DSS). Ms. Mahoney presented information and details on the following topics on behalf of DSS: wheeled mobility device policy – Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT); PA requirements for members living at home/community; PA requirements for members in skilled nursing facilities/care facilities; CRT costs to members and Medicaid waivers; possible PA requirements for repairs of CRT when prior authorization is required for repairs.

Following Ms. Mahoney's presentation, Melissa Marshall asked about home assessments for wheelchair access, specifically who makes those assessments, how long it takes, what architectural standards are they using, and if it's discovered that a modification is needed, if that gets completed, and who pays for that. Ms. Mahoney explained that these standards are based on the Assistive Technology Professional (ATP). She further specified that modifications are done to the wheelchair, and these should be able to allow the individual to navigate through all the places in their living space. Ms. Marshall followed up and asked about the timeframe of getting a wheelchair repaired while living in a nursing facility. Ms. Mahoney responded that she doesn't believe that there's a different set of rules between someone living at home versus someone living in a nursing facility. Ms. Mahoney went on to explain that a lot of this depends on the Durable Medical Equipment (DME) vendor.

Rep. Case asked Ms. Mahoney to confirm that she was talking about strictly Medicaid users, and he followed up by asking when Medicaid would remove the \$1,000 threshold for procedure codes that require prior authorization (PA). Ms. Mahoney said that there are many procedure codes below the \$1000 threshold amount that do not require PA. Rep. Case then asked how long that policy had been in place, to which Ms. Mahoney said she believed that it started in 2016.

Chair Brakeman welcomed Rick Famiglietti, who asked Ms. Mahoney about the timeframe of prescription coverage for a wheelchair repair. He also asked if tires and tubes required prior authorization, and added that in some cases, doctors take 2-3

weeks to get that paperwork back to the vendor. He added that the regulations need to be reviewed, and he and Ms. Mahoney discussed obtaining a wheel mobility device in a nursing facility.

Sen. Seminara followed up on the prescription issue and asked about the possibility of another, separate repair on a wheelchair (other than what's included in the policy), and what that process/timeline looks like for someone trying to get repairs done. Ms. Mahoney answered that the prescription should be good for repair, and Sen. Seminara clarified that she wanted to know what it would look like outside of the prescription. Sen. Seminara then asked about adaptations to a home, and who covers expenses if the wheelchair doesn't fit in a home. Sen. Seminara then asked if Ms. Mahoney had a log of any complaints. Ms. Mahoney responded by saying that she would reach out to the Department's Administrative Services Organization (Community Health Network of Connecticut (CHNCT) to obtain this information.

Chair Brakeman called on Mr. Grau, who had a discussion with Ms. Mahoney on prior authorization paperwork, timeframes, emergency situations, etc., and asked her for more information on the matter.

Chair Brakeman called on Jonathan Sigworth, who discussed the cost-effectiveness of getting a new wheelchair with Ms. Mahoney, as well as the possibilities of insurance denying those who need repairs done the help that they require.

Chair Brakeman thanked Ms. Mahoney for her handling of questions. She then called on Gary Gilberti, who discussed assessing homes for mobility equipment installation, as well as tires and tubes, which he emphasized are things that people should be able to obtain easily and quickly, especially in emergency situations.

Chair Brakeman made note that there will probably have to be meetings in between the next official task force meeting, and she called on Mr. Toubman, who discussed with Mr. Famiglietti and Ms. Mahoney what can be removed from prescription issues and requirements to make things go quicker. He also suggested to the group that these task force meetings be longer.

Chair Brakeman called on Jonathan Slifka, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner at the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), who asked Ms. Mahoney for information about the prior authorization process in emergency situations and/or repairs.

Chair Brakeman called on Darrell Ruopp, who described his experience as a technician trying to help people who need repairs. He emphasized that he wanted to stop marking up prices and improve accessibility and timely repairs.

Chair Brakeman proposed that Lara Manzione from OSC and Susan Halpin from CID have their presentations, and then have the members email their questions and concerns to the task force administrator, Chandra Persaud.

### **Presentation from the Office of the State Comptroller:**

Lara Manzione discussed the plan language and what it covers currently. Chair Brakeman asked for more information about how the state plan(s) handles wear-and-tear and repairs.

### **Presentation from the Insurance Industry:**

Chair Brakeman called on Susan Halpin to discuss industry numbers and the commercial market. Ms. Halpin emphasized that in the commercial market, there are different plans and benefits packages to choose from. She emphasized that the state has authority to regulate the fully-insured market *only* representing an estimated 13% of Connecticut's population - meaning any new insurance mandates passed would only apply to that segment market. For more information on claims paid and for what services, Ms. Halpin suggested consulting with the Office of Health Strategy (OHS) to access their All Payer Claims Database (APCD).

Chair Brakeman proposed a meeting on Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to noon. Mr. Grau asked if that could be sent out to members to check their schedules and discuss. Chair Brakeman then emphasized that she would be discussing a revamped schedule with others and would circle back to members.

### **Announcement of Time and Date of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:00AM to 11:00AM.

### **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05PM.

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Chandra Persaud  
Task Force Administrator

Austin Hyatt  
Minutes Prepared by